

It is eroding our steel industry. It is hurting our steelworkers. And I am hoping that the Members will heed the message that the gentleman from Ohio is bringing before us and we hope the administration will wake up to this call before it is too late.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for yielding to me.

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for his comments. He is absolutely right. The tools are there. We need the will to use them. And, obviously, it is not just steel jobs, but there is an enormous ripple effect, because the steel families will purchase goods in the communities they live in, they support the schools, the United Way, it has an enormous impact.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER).

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from Ohio for his leadership on this issue. This is an issue that impacts not just the State of Ohio but the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs of northwestern Indiana which historically has always been a major steel producing area.

It is unfortunate that because of the inaction of the Clinton administration, Acme Steel has declared bankruptcy. Birmingham in my district is shortening their work hours. Belson Scrap and Steel has reduced their payroll by 10 percent. All because we have seen a doubling of Japanese steel imports in the United States, and just in the last year almost a doubling of Korean steel imports in this country.

Steelworkers are losing their jobs. And while steelworkers lose their jobs, the Clinton administration is doing nothing. I believe it is time for action. I think it is time that this Congress make it very clear that we expect the President and the Clinton administration to take leadership to help steelworkers. Otherwise we are going to see more steelworkers lose their jobs because of inaction by the Clinton administration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. DELAURO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SESSIONS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

CONGRESS SHOULD FOCUS ON EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to urge the leadership of the House to focus on education before we leave this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, we have important duties to do in order for us to be able to be partners with our local communities, with parents, community schools with the State governments, to make sure that our children have the resources and the skills that they need when they graduate so that they can be successful in this new world economy.

We know that we need higher standards and lower classroom sizes. And, in fact, we have the opportunity in the next few days to be able to help contribute to making that happen. I am extremely concerned about the efforts now that appear to be moving in exactly the opposite direction from where we should be as it relates to education.

As someone who has worked for a number of years and spent a lot of time in this Congress focusing on technology, I am very concerned that we are not moving ahead to modernize our schools, provide the construction funds, and provide the technology dollars that are needed to prepare our children so that they will be able to have the skills that they need to be successful.

It does not matter if I am talking to the business community in my district or if I am talking to a PTO or if I am talking to a neighborhood organization, always I hear from people that we need to be focused on increasing our skills, our math and science skills, be able to provide the tools to children in the classroom so that in fact they have what they need to be successful. Employers know that. We know that, just as we listen to people in the community. And yet we do not see the actions coming from this Congress that will support those kinds of things happening in the community.

Let us make a commitment this evening that we are going to make a commitment to our children, we are going to make a commitment to parents, to communities, that we are going to do what is necessary to provide resources in partnership with our local schools and with the State governments to make sure that our children have what they need.

We need to make sure that when a young person is in a classroom today, they have access to the technology they need, to the information, to the world that is available now through the Internet and to allow them to be able to truly receive the kinds of skills that they need in smaller classes and with higher standards so that they can be prepared.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY).

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, in the last 2 years, I have

spent an awful lot of time in my schools in my district. After the first month, I decided to do a survey just to look at all my schools that needed help and repair.

I come from a middle-income suburban area, and I have to say that I was totally shocked at what I found. What hurt even more is when the survey came in, all of my schools needed some sort of help as far as repair. They have put it off constantly over the years.

I have one school in Hempstead that to this day, I went back just a week ago to look at it again, because I could not believe my eyes every time I go into there. They have a boiler from 1908. They cannot find anyone to repair it anymore, and yet they do not have the money to do this. They have open classrooms. This school was built way before World War II, and here we have our children in open classrooms. Kids with learning disabilities in the hallways. Children with hearing problems not having the right facilities.

As someone who grew up with learning disabilities, I certainly know how important it is to have a secluded quiet area. Technology has to come into the school. We are nowhere near it.

So what we can do? Certainly, I agree with the President's initiatives to bring our schools up to where they should be today. What concerns me the most is we know we need school construction to give a safe environment for our children. But also more importantly, we need to send a message to our children that we care about them. Also sending a message to our teachers.

Mr. Speaker, going back, I have met so many teachers over the last 2 years. These are teachers that care very much. But when we have the classrooms so large and we have kids coming in in an environment which I consider not safe, not sound, we have to do all we can.

I came to Congress to reduce gun violence in this country, and as soon as I got here, education became my number one issue. If we start working with these young people, have smaller classes, give them hope, give them a good education, we are not going to see drugs in the school, we are not going to see violence in the school. Is that not the goal of all of us here?

I certainly support the initiative that we have to do with the President, and hopefully we will see it pass before we go home.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that if we expand educational opportunities to all Americans, especially young people, we can reduce crime, drug use and gun violence in our society.

I do not believe that education is a partisan issue. But I am very concerned that partisanship in these last days of the session may prevent us from improving the education system. We have a golden opportunity to help young

people reach their fullest potential. And we cannot let it slip away.

Because education is so important to my constituents and to me, I sought and received an assignment on the Education and Workforce Committee when I arrived in Congress. And I spend every Monday and Friday in the schools on Long Island, talking with students, teachers, principals, superintendents, and parents about how we can make the education system work better.

One of the things I hear time and again is the importance of a well-prepared teacher in every classroom. Sadly, some people like to blame teachers for all the problems in education. But that is not the answer. The reason I know this, is because I have seen many great teachers in action.

Last year, our Committee invited a number of young teachers who had graduated two to three years earlier to testify. And they told us, "We love our jobs. We love to teach. We do our best." But they also told us that once they graduated, they weren't ready to deal with all the pressures in the classroom. They said they needed more support, more mentoring.

So last year, I introduced the America's Teacher Preparation Improvement Act. This bill will strengthen the federal government's commitment to teacher preparation. It focuses on three critical areas—recruiting new teachers, making sure they are well-prepared while in school, and then supporting them in their first years on the job. It also encourages colleges to set up partnerships with school districts so that teachers can move from the lecture hall to the classroom.

I am pleased to say that in a bipartisan vote, Congress approve the provisions of my bill as a part of the Higher Education Act reauthorization, and the President signed it into law last week.

But there is more to do. The number of kids enrolled in school is growing, and many current teachers are getting ready to retire. We will need 2 million new teachers in the next decade alone just to handle the load. But fewer people are entering the profession, and grade schools in many parts of the country are facing severe teacher shortages.

Improving how we prepare our teachers won't help students if there aren't new teachers to prepare. That is why it is so important that we approve the President's plan to fund 100,000 new teachers. If we are serious about education, then we must ensure that we have a dedicated corps of new teachers ready to enter the classroom.

Just as our students need well-prepared teachers, they deserve school buildings that are conducive to learning. I have seen firsthand that many schools are overcrowded or in poor condition. When I visited one school in my district, the Washington Rose School in Roosevelt, I was shocked to see kids learning in hallways, surrounded by crumbling roofs and windows. Even worse was its library, which had makeshift shelves, few seats, and poor ventilation.

What kind of message do we send kids about reading when we make them read in a room like that? And what message do we send to teachers when we ask them to educate children in overcrowded, run-down classrooms?

These problems surprised me, because suburban areas like mine are not supposed to have overcrowded and run-down schools. But

they do. Last Fall, I conducted a survey of the schools in my District, asking them about the physical condition of their schools. I learned that our schools do need financial support to repair and rebuild their buildings.

That is why the President's initiative to provide tax incentives to fix school buildings is so important. And that is why I support the plan to reduce class sizes in the first through third grades. Again, if we are serious about education, then we should pass these initiatives.

We all know what it will take to improve our education system: Well-prepared teachers. New buildings. Less crowded classrooms. It's time that we show our young people that we are committed to their education, and to their future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MILLER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR 105TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I look back over the last 2 years, and I am pretty proud of the record of accomplishment for this Congress, a record of accomplishment where we accomplished a lot of things that people said we could not do.

I remember when I was elected to Congress as part of that class in 1994 who came to Washington to change how Washington works, to do things that Washington had failed to do for over a generation, things that families back home do every day, like balancing the budget and working to raise take-home pay and working to lower the tax burden on the middle-class and working to change a failed welfare system.

On every one of these initiatives, we were told by certain newspapers in the East and by my friends on the other side of the aisle that we could not do that. We could not balance the budget; that we could not cut taxes for the middle class; that we could not reform our welfare system; that we could not help our schools; that we could not change the tax collector and reform and restructure the IRS.

As I look back now over the last 2 years, I am pretty proud of what we accomplished, because we did all of those

things they said we would not be able to do.

We balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years this past year. And the budget is so well balanced now, we are now projected to have over \$1.6 trillion in extra tax revenue over the next 10 years.

We cut taxes for the middle-class for the first time in 16 years, and for a traditional family of mom and dad and two kids on the south side of Chicago in the south suburbs, those middle-class tax cuts can mean an extra \$10,000 in higher take-home pay over the next few years.

Those are big victories for the middle-class: Balancing the balance and cutting taxes. And we also reformed the welfare system for the first time in a generation, taking an outdated, outmoded welfare system that placed more children in poverty than ever before in history. It was time to make a change, and I am proud that the first real welfare reform in a generation has reduced our Nation's welfare rolls by 20 percent.

□ 1900

People often say, that is pretty good. That is a pretty good record of accomplishment for the Congress in the last 2 years, balancing the budget for the first time in 28 years, cutting middle class taxes for the first time in 16 years, reforming welfare for the first time in a generation. What is next? What is Congress going to do in 1998?

I am proud to say we have also made a lot of progress in 1998. We restructured and tamed the tax collector, shifting the burden of proof from the backs of the taxpayer onto the IRS, giving you the same rights with the IRS that you have in the courtroom. We passed legislation just yesterday and sent it to the President to protect kids from those who would prey on them via the Internet.

I am also proud to say that we continue to make education a priority. In fact, that balanced budget that we produced last year, the first balanced budget in 28 years, made education a priority. In fact, education was one of the big winners in the first balanced budget in 28 years. We increased funding for education by 10 percent, a \$5.4 billion funding increase. Now, thanks to this Republican majority in the Congress, we have the lowest student loan interest rates in 17 years. We have doubled Pell grants to twice what they were when I was elected, to help more low income students go on to college. We have made mandates where we have told our local schools we want you to do something. We have actually provided the funding, increased funding for special education, for example, by \$500 million.

Those are big victories for education. I am proud of what we have been able to do in the last two and last four years in this Congress. I, too, have visited a lot of schools in the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs. I speak often and listen to the concerns of